Questions for “Ta-Na-E-Ka”

1. How do you feel about the way Mary survives Ta-Na-E-Ka? Is it fair? Should she be sent out again?
2. Mary and Roger face an external conflict with the older generation about Ta-Na-E-Ka. What arguments do Mary’s mother, grandfather and teacher offer in support of the ritual? What arguments do Mary and Roger give against it? Whose side are you on?
3. What internal conflict does Mary feel when Ernie says that Ta-Na-E-Ka is silly?
4. Consider the following statements; then answer the questions below them.
5. Most adults understand the problems of growing up.
6. Most adults expect too much of young people.
7. Most kids at least try to see problems from an adult’s point of view.

Do you think Mary would have agreed or disagreed with these statements before Ta-Na-E-Ka? How does Mary feel about her heritage and the older generation after the ritual?

1. Do you agree with Grandfather that Mary could have passed the survival test “under any circumstances, in any time”? Explain.
2. What traditions does your family expect you to honor? Compare and contrast your feelings about these traditions with Mary’s feelings about Kaw traditions.
3. Does this story teach a lesson about the role of tradition in today’s society? What do you think that lesson might be?
4. Mary’s teacher says to her, “Don’t look down on your heritage.” Why do people sometimes “look down” on their heritage? What parts of your heritage do you value most?